

# critical digest

139 East 47 St. NY 17 NY  
EL 5-6894 T.M. Kraus



Sept 11, 1957 Vol IX No 38 The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter Digest Tenth Year Published 52 weeks a year \$25 per year

## This Week

O'Casey's I Knock at the Door, presented for 2 performances in May 1956 at YMHA, found a Broadway home. It will be presented by Paul Shyre and Howard Gottfried at the Belasco Sept 29 with four members of the original six member cast. This includes Aline MacMahon, Staats Cotsworth, Rae Allen and Shyre, who also made the adaption.

## Plays

Happy Hunting set to close Nov 30... Alfred de Liagre, Jr, replaced Basil Langton as director Nature's Way... Richard Whorf to direct and design The Genius and the Goddess, adapted from Aldous Huxley's novel... A Houseful of Love to be presented next year by Paul Gregory, John Patrick to adapt Marjorie Housepian's novel... Jack Carter to get 6% of gross of Carefree Heart with \$2000 guarantee.

## Players

Judy Holliday and Sydney Chaplin returned to Bells Are Ringing after vacation... Broadway debuts due this season include--Ellen McRae, Fair Game... Gerald Mohr, Square Root of Wonderful... Susan Kohner, The Young Strangers... Philip Abbot, The Square Root of Wonderful.

June Havoc to star in One Foot in Door, comedy by Julie Berns due in Dec... Howard da Silva and Frank Conroy to have leading roles in Compulsion... Wayne Morris signed for The Cave Dwellers... Jerome Cowan joined Rumple... Luella Gear replaced Ann Andrews, Four Winds... Richard Easton and Ernest Thesiger added to The Country Wife.

Helen Haye, age 83, Britain's oldest working actress, died... Helen Ormsbee, special feature writer for Herald Tribune drama section, died.

## Critics

Frank Ashton, former drama critic of Cincinnati Post, currently filing reviews for NY World Telegram & Sun. Tom Donnelly to return to post ad reviewer for Washington News.

## Theatre Record Notes

Decca to record original cast album of Carefree Heart.

## Calendar

Carousel-City Center 9/11. Limited run revival of Rodgers & Hammerstein classic with Howard Keel, Barbara Cook Victor Moore... Tevya and his Daughters-Carnegie Hall Playhouse 9/16. Banner Productions present Arnold Perl's adaptation of Sholem Aleichem's stories with Mike Kellin, directed by Howard da Silva... Macbeth-Heckscher Theatre (5th Av & 104th St). Joseph Papp's NY Shakespeare Festival production presented indoors, after Central Park run.

## Theatre TV Notes

Emlyn Williams will present a 90 minute TV adaption of Boswell's "Life of Samuel Johnson" on Omnibus this season... Who's Earnest, a musical version of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" to be presented Oct 9 on CBS US Steel. Cast includes Edward Mulhare, Dorothy Collins, David Atkinson, Martyn Green, Music by Lee Pockriss, lyrics by Ann Crosswell.

## Other Broadways

Erlagher Theatre, Philadelphia, sold to William Goldman for \$530,000... Middle of the Night tour with Edward G. Robinson opens Oct 9 in New Haven.

## London

All Kinds of Men by Alex Samuels to be presented Sept 19 at Arts... Ralph Richardson and Celia Johnson to star in Flowering Cherry by R O Bolt, opens pre-London tour Oct 14

## Theatre Book Notes

Second edition of "The Oxford Companion to the Theatre" edited by Phyllis Hartnoll published by Oxford University Press.

## Shakespeare Festivals

Stratford, Conn. final week's program includes performances of Merchant of Venice Sept 11, 12, 13, matinees Sept 11, 14 and Much Ado About Nothing Sept 14, matinee Sept 15. Latter production considered for possible Jan. run at refurbished Globe.

## Off Broadway

Thornton Wilder writing 7 one act plays to be presented at Circle in the Square this season. Two completed are entitled "Bernice" and "The Wreck on the 5: 25."

Pink String and Sealing Wax closed after 6 performances at Royal... Banner Productions reports \$25,000 advance sale for Tevya and his Daughters... Moliere Productions to be formed by John Fostini and Vincent Compo to present The Merry Pranks of Holman based on Moliere's "Les Fourberies de Scapin" at an Off Broadway house in Oct.

Zahra Norbo and Albert Ottenheimer joined The Italian Straw Hat... Elaine Eldridge and Byrne Piven added to Johnny Summitt... Clerambard moved opening date to Nov 8 at Rooftop.

## Summer Playhouses

Current considerations for Jones Beach next season include a production built around Stephen Foster songs and Mardi Gras, spectacle by Carmen Lombardo and John Jacob Loeb.

## College Theatre

Wayne State University Theatre, Detroit, to send repertory of 3 plays to India in Feb. under auspices of ANTA.

## Equity Notes

Money deposited by producers with Actors Equity to cover bonds to be invested, via Bankers Trust, to pay interest. League of NY Theatres to get income.

## Out of Town Calendar

West Side Story tryout tour continues in Philadelphia... San Francisco playing--Annie Get Your Gun, Diary of Anne Frank and No Time for Sergeants... My Fair Lady in Omaha... Fanny and The Reluctant Debutante in Los Angeles.

## Park Finale

After one week's run of The Consul, Central Park's Theatre -under-the-Stars operation concludes season with a one week jazz bill headlining Lionel Hampton.

## Digests of Current NYC Theatre Reviews

**The Consul** - Central Park Theatre Under the Stars 9/3. 3 rave notices, 3 mild pros and 1 con- Herald Tribune- filed on revival of Menotti's musical drama with several members of original Broadway cast including Patricia Neway. News, Mirror and Journal American aisle-men filed the raves, cheering the production by Chandler Cowles, in association with Michael Grace and Chris Anderson as near perfect. Show should earn the theatre a foothold in the artistic life of the city, commented Chapman, News. A real spellbinder, well presented worth an extension, added Coleman, Mirror. A precise and professional performance of a musical play that is never dull, joined McClain, Journal American. Milder views voiced by Schonberg, Times, Peper, World Telegram & Sun, and Johnson, Post, mostly because of the faults in the sound and light systems. Music critic of Times also found fault with slim size of first night audience. Sole con vote from Harrison, Herald Tribune, who feared that with sloppy production the score shrank and the entire opera spoke with a puny, bloodless voice.

**Pink Strings and Sealing Wax** - Royal -62 E 49/5-9/8 4 cons and 2 pros- Journal American and Womens Wear- greeted Off Broadway production of Roland Pertwee's play, presented by Rosemary Berkeley and Paula Dean and directed by John Ainsworth. British play ran a year in London, but only lasted four days in NYC. Script and direction panned by the majority as uninteresting and dull. Combination of period playwrighting and arch direction is debilitating, summed Atkinson, Times. Kerr, Herald Tribune, conceded that possibly with better direction, play might have come off as mildly charming stunt. Watts, Post, among others noted that Eileen Summers and Mercer McLeod showed considerable more promise than script itself. Pro vote filed by McClain, Journal American, added that as Off Broadway it was acceptable providing a delightful evening of theatre. Dash, Womens Wear, found it a mettlesome production that deserves an Off Broadway hearing.

### Hits Revisited

**Separate Tables** with Geraldine Page in the double role originated by Margaret Leighton impressed four NY critics. English twin-bill has re-opened after month's busman's holiday in Colorado. Kerr, Herald Tribune, found in the Page performance something still childlike, emotionally unformed, pettishly demanding, rather than the tantalizing mask of Leighton. Her gratifying display of versatility makes her succession interesting and successful, added Watts, Post. He also cheered Eric Portman for his sheer technical facility. He like Kerr applauded Beryl Measor's portrayal. The display Page makes is thoroughly satisfactory, joins Ashton, World Telegram & Sun. Triumphant in both roles, noted Dash, Women's Wear. Producers Theatre and Robert Whitehead will tour play after NY run.

### Summer's End

**The Dazzling Hour** a new play by Anna Bonacci presented at Stroudsburg, Pa. okayed as a traditional type French farce done with a splendid cast by Lest, Variety... **The Golden Lantern**, a new play by M. K. Stewart (Marie Doro) and Rebecca Franklin, presented at Barter Theatre, Abington, Virginia, panned by Ande, Variety as filled with too much talk. He rated the acting exceptional throughout, with Marcie Hubert exceptionally so.

## THEATRE

### BOOK

### COMMENTS



David Ewin's biography of Richard Rodgers, published by Holt, praised by Chapman, News, as a straightaway affectionate presentation, a useful piece of knowledge on the US musical theatre. Book falls slightly in probing minds and personalities of Rodgers and Hammerstein.

"Freddy", the biography of Frederick Lonsdale by his daughter Francis Donaldson, published by Lippincott, added another pro notice from Chapman, News. In one of the best and best written biographies, she surveys both her father and the world he lived in.



## LONDON

### VIEWS

Defeatists who proclaim the living theatre is dead should take a look at Guildford Theatre, points out "The Stage." In a town of 50,000 weekly attendance at the Guildford Theatre, which presents repertory, is up 8000 and averages 70% weekly year round. The management presents worthwhile theatre at a reasonable price at the public's doorstep. The producers are not content with endless revivals of plays that have had successful London runs. Four world premieres, two English premieres were included in the 41 productions last year. The living theatre, through the medium of the repertory movement is on the brink of a new period of progress and prosperity, trade journal concludes.



### ATTENTION

- \* Investors
- \* Producers
- \* Editors
- \* Ticket Buyers
- \* Little Theatres
- \* Libraries

10th year of service

Published 52 weeks per year

\$25 per year

Check Attached \_\_\_\_\_

Bill Me: \_\_\_\_\_

This weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter Digest presents---

\* **INVESTORS FACTSHEET**  
Insert giving exclusive background data on productions seeking investors.

\* Box Office Receipts and critical data tabulated.

\* Complete theatre news

\* Reviews of all current NY openings by 7 daily papers

\* Comments by critics on diverse theatre subjects

\* NY critics suggestions on theatre books, records, TV.

\* Free spring back binder  
\* Free research service

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_



# GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT



" PROS & CONS BY TMK "

**BOX OFFICE HITS...** 3 forthcoming shows have already made it at the box office, reports Kleiner, World Telegram-Sun. Music Man musical by Meredith Wilson has advance of \$500,000. Compulsion has 80 theatre parties booked, with casting still in progress. Miss Isobel with Shirley Booth has 68 theatre parties and an advance of \$400,000... Romanoff and Juliet has a \$500,000 advance, reports Sullivan, News.

**COLUMN TIPS...** Buff Cobb dodging process-servers because of the ill-famed Summer stock troupe at Lake Hopatcong, NJ, hears Winchell, Mirror... Romanoff and Juliet previewed to Boston audience of waitresses and chambermaids, whispers Farrell, WT & S.

**WHY IT LIVES...** Theatre goes on through recorded time because in every generation a few dramatists ask themselves the eternal questions and write their answers in fire and wonder, surmises Atkinson, Times. External conditions influence the theatre, but nothing stops it. It is a fundamental part of the human organism that has an instinct for survival and for increasing the range of its knowledge and power.

**CRITICAL THOUGHTS...** Actresses help keep our living theatre alive, comments Chapman, News, who is thankful that legit has never had a trend toward the drip such as the movies have shown in the last decade... Though McClain, Journal American, tries hard and far to get away from theatre in the summer, he finds it impossible to avoid theatre talk which he truly enjoys... Posterity has a way of making up its own mind on which playwrights live, Watts, Post, notes in recalling his visits with Eugene O'Neill. Previously Kerr, Herald Tribune, had commented that he doubted if O'Neill's plays will be revived in future generations.

**DRAMA MAIL BOX...** Herman Levin, My Fair Lady producer, answers Times reader who panned his production by asking when latter's visiting hours are, for he must be in grave condition... A college theatre festival for City Center at Christmas time featuring top drama groups from entire country, proposed by "C.D" subscriber.

**ED WYNN INTERVIEW...** Though he was offered roles in 7 Broadway plays this season, he has turned them all down, Ed Wynn told "Critical Digest". Wynn, currently enacting a role in the Warner's film "Marjorie Morningstar" on location at Schroon Lake, NY, will be honored on Sept 19 NBC TV "Texaco Command Appearance" in which top stars of today will portray stars associated with highlights of Wynn's career. This is the first TV show in a proposed series presented with aide of American Theatre Wing, which will receive a \$10,000 fee for each show.

Two of the seven shows he was offered have already flopped, one being the ill fated Maiden Voyage. He has turned down the Broadway roles for the simple fact that he wants to spend as much time as possible with his family in California. Producers who offered him scripts included Mary Frank, Elliot Nugent and Kermit Bloomgarden.

The last stage appearance of the comic-turned-actor was in Big Time, a vaudeville which played on the West Coast in 1948. His last NY stage appearance was in Laugh, Clown Laugh.

Though he has no plans of writing his own life story, because he feels his life has not been fully lived yet, he is considering a film script entitled "The Man in the Funny Suit" which would present selected incidents in his life. The complete biography of Wynn is something he plans to leave as an inheritance to his son, Keenan.

The Consul presented in Central Park's Theatre-Under-The Stars gave theatre fans a taste of the kind of summer fare they might have had this summer and that might be presented next summer. Granted that both the light and sound systems can be improved, the caliber of the production was equal to the best of outdoor theatre. It is a pity that theatre fans, both of the winter and summer theatre varieties, found the show too "high-brow" to support for more than a single week.

A best seller non-fiction book, a popular novel, an equally popular female star, a well-known composer--- these are some of the things that huge advance sales are made of this season. With six shows already reporting advances of over \$500,000, those careful souls who wait for first night reviews before purchasing ducats, will wait for months to see the box-office hits if they also become critical hits.

Judging from reports filed from Greece by Kerr, Herald Tribune, the NY and Athens theatre has at least one thing in common. NY has had no theatres in 30 years and Athens has had no new theatres in 2000 years.

It does seem a bit ungrateful for the producer of a top hit to even suggest in jest that a newspaper reader who did not like his prize winning musical might be sick in the head. The medicine for this cure is a \$9.60 ticket to the producer's next show and a shut mouth.

Though the new season promises few new playwrights, many producers are presenting new and untried performers making their Broadway debuts. In the case of several, said actor or actress has made a recent film appearance which the producer may or may not be trying to cash in on. Several of them showed little talent on screen and may be better "in person."

With a theatre shortage in NYC a certainty within a month, producers of shows in rehearsal could ease the tension perhaps by planning longer pre-Broadway road tours. Not tryouts, but road tours after the show is set as it will finally appear in NYC. Some producers with wise advance promotion have been able to earn back all the production money on extended pre-Broadway tours. The abundance of TV drama shows based on legit, show trains-planes, the ANTA 40 city plan and other elements add to the available theatre audiences for first class theatre this year.

A recession is needed to cut theatre costs and prices, veteran producer Max Gordon said on a recent radio broadcast. If this is the only way to get them, we hope theatre prices never come down.

If any new theatres are to be built in the many office buildings to go up in the next few years in the midtown area, it is going to be the ticket buyers who will have to fight for them. Theatre producers are great believers in the status quo as far as new houses are concerned. But ticket buyers can express their interest in new theatres and their complaints about ancient theatre buildings. Theatre is probably the only American industry in which management feels a new plant is not an asset.



This weekly chart of CRITICAL DIGEST, the weekly NYC theatre newsletter digest, presents up-to-date data on current business and critical reception on current Broadway and Off-Broadway shows. Subscribers to CRITICAL DIGEST may call, write or phone for any other specific data for for late reviews.

"C"- Critical- figures refer to percentage of PRO reviews filed by NYC daily reviewers. PRO means show was recommended for entertaining and/or stimulating evening, not if critic predicted if show would be hit or not.

"B"-Business'-figures refer to percentage of gross ticket sales. "%B" figures refer to percentage of past week's attendance and indicates current availability of tickets. "CAP" figures refer to gross capacity of house. Figures that follow are gross estimates by Variety for past week and previous weeks. All figures are in thousands of dollars. Thus 100% B-Cap \$68--\$68 \$64--means this past week attraction was sell-out, capacity of house is \$68,000 and previous week gross was \$64,000, etc.

\*\*\*\*\*

NEW GIRL IN TOWN 46th St \$9.20	226 W 46 CI 6-6271	80% C- 2 Con- Times, Trib, -most OK Abbott 85% B- Cap \$59--\$53 \$50 \$49 \$48 \$43
NO TIME SGTS Alvin \$5.75	149 W 52 CI 5-5226	100% C- Unanimous praise soldier comedy 65% B- Cap \$38--\$21- \$19 \$20 \$17 \$20 \$20
SEPARATE TABLES Music Box \$5.75	239 W 45 CI 6-4636	100% C- Unanimous praise Eng. twin-bill RE OPENED THIS WEEK
SIMPLY HEAVENLY Playhouse \$4.60	137 W 48 CI 5-6060	80% C- 4 Pro( Times not cover) 2 Con- 55% B- Cap \$25-- \$14 \$ 13
TUNNEL OF LOVE Royale \$5.75	250 W 45 CI 6-8870	30% C- 2 Pro- H Trib, News, Scriptpanned 50% B- Cap \$27--\$14 \$13 \$13 \$19 \$19 \$15
VISIT SMALL PLANET Booth \$5.75	231 W 45 CI 6-5969	100% C- Okays mostly for Ritchards 75% B- Cap \$27--\$21 \$19 \$19 \$19 \$15 \$17

# " LONDON CALENDAR "

Sept 10- The Entertainer- Palace  
 Sept 17- Nekrassov- Royal Court  
 Sept 18- Hamlet- Old Vic  
 Sept 19- Chinese Classical Theatre- Drury Lane  
 Oct 16- Henry VI- Part 1 & 2- Old Vic  
 Oct 17- Henry VI- Part 3- Old Vic

# "RATINGS OF NYC CRITICS "

1956-57 season ratings of NYC drama critics on current Broadway shows by Critical Digest. % figures are percentage of pro votes in comparison to con votes by critics on current shows, Pro signifying they recommended show. Variety season figures are percentages of favorable reviews by critics for entire season, Variety's basis being if they predicted show would be a financial success or not.

17 Shows	CD %	Pros	Cons	Variety 1956-57	'55-56	'54-55
Atkinson, Times	80%	14	3	.291	.490	.607
Kerr, H. Trib	55%	11	6	.229	.394	.354
Chapman, News	95%	16	1	.541	.527	.580
Coleman, Mirror	90%	15	2	.446	.454	.566
Watts, Post	90%	15	2	.404	.541	.426
McClain, J. Am.	80%	14	3	.469	.535	.532
Donnelly, WTS (1955 Hawkins)	80%	14	3	.234	.306	.549

# " OFF BROADWAY "

CAREER Actors Play \$3.45	100 7th Av S OR 5-1036	3 Pro-Times, Post, WT & S
ICEMAN COMETH Circle \$3.60	5 Sher Sq. OR 5-9437	6 Pro-Times, Trib, Mir, J. Am, Post, WT & S.
IN KING CHARLES Downtown \$3.45	85 E 4 OR 3-4412	6 Pro-Times, Trib, Mir, Post WT & S, Variety
PURPLE DUST Cherry Lane \$3.85	31 Comm. CH 2-4468	4 Pro-Times, Trib, Post' WTS 2 Con- News, J. Am.
SWEENEY TODD Sullivan \$4.15	OR 4-3838 118 Sullivan	3 Pro-Times, Trib, WTS 3 Con- Post, J. Am. W. Wear
3 SYNGE PLAYS T. East \$2.80	211 E 60 TE 8-8930	5 Pro-Times, Post, Mir, J. Am, WTS 2 Con- Trib, Variety
3 PENNY OPERA De Lys \$4.85	121 Chris. WA 4-8782	3 Pro-Times, Trib, Post

# " OUT OF TOWN "

SHOW BOAT Jones Beach \$4.40	NY Phone CI 7-7992	7 Pro-Unanimous approval FINAL WEEK
AM. SHAKES FEST Stratford, Conn \$4.40	NY Phone WA 5-1378	FINAL WEEK Merchant( 4-2) Much Ado ( 5-1)

# " CD VIEWS ON CURRENT SHOWS "

PROS:	Damn Yankees, Long Days Journey, Most Happy Fella, New Girl Separate Tables, Tunnel of Love
	3 Synge Plays, Iceman Cometh, Purple Dust, In King Charles
CONS:	Sweeney Todd

# " THEATRE CALENDAR "

Carousel- City Center 9/11	Rumple- Alvin 11/3
Tevya and Daughters-Carn Play. 9/16	Nine O Clock Theatre 11/4
Macbeth- Heckscher- 9/18	Soft Touch- 11/6
Johnny Summit- Renati- 9/24	Carefree Heart- ANTA 11/7
Four Winds- Cort 9/25	Cleremhard- Rooftop 11/8
West Side Story- W. Garden 9/26	High and Happy- 11/7
Best of Burlesque-Carn. Play 9/27	Time Remembered- Morosco 11/12
Italian Strawhat- 4th St 9/30	The Rope Dancers- 11/20
New Faces- 10/1	Conversation Piece-Barbizon 11/20
Look Back in Anger-Lyceum 10/1	Kukla, Fran & Ollie 11/21
The Bachelor- Gate 10// 1	Makropoulos- Phoenix 11/22
The Bizarre- 3rd St 10/?	Country Wife- Adelphi 11/27
Saturday Night Kid-Morsco 10/2	Dark at Top of Stairs- Music Box 12/5
Miss Lonelyhearts- Music Box 10/3	Music Man- 12/19
Boy Growing Up- Longacre 10/7	Nude with Violin-Belasco 12/22
All that Fall- Carn. Play 10/7	Beaux Strategem-Phoenix 12/22
Mary Stuart- Phoenix 10/8	Miss Isobel- Royale- 12/26
The Egghead- Barrymore 10/9	Salt Air- 1/26
Romanoff and Juliet- Plymouth 10/10	The Rivalry- 1/27
Cave Dwellers- Bijou 10/12	Captain's Paradise-Alvin 1/28
Under Milkwood- Miller 10/15	Sunrise at Campobello- 1/30
Nature's Way- Coronet 10/16	Love Me Little- 2/6
Copper and Brass- Beck 10/17	Waltz of Toreadors 2/24
Compulsion- Ambassador 10/21	
Monique- Golden 10/22	
Fair Game- Longacre 10/23	
For Amusement Only -10/25	
Square Root Wonderful-National 10/30	
Jamaica- Imperial 10/31	

# " TV THEATRE PROGRAMS "

Sept 19- NBC- Ed Wyrn Story on Texeco  
 Sept 29- CBS- "Crescendo" with Rex Harrison, Ethel Merman  
 Oct 9- CBS- "Importance of Being Earnest" musical with David Atkinson  
 Oct 27- NBC- "Green Pastures" on Hall of Fame  
 Nov 17- CBS- 7 Lively Arts Debut  
 Nov 27- NBC- "Annie Get Your Gun" with Mary Martin, John Ralitt  
 Feb 9- NBC- "Twelfth Night" with Maurice Evans  
 Feb 21- CBS- "Aladdin" musical by Cole Porter  
 Apr 25- NBC- "Dial M for Murder" with Maurice Evans

Abbott  
443

edy  
620

ill

ened  
15